

I am concerned about the proposed rate reduction for a company that provides superb services to the community as well as its own employees. I want to share my feelings from two perspectives. One perspective is as an employee for Sorenson Communications and the other as a member of the Deaf community.

I am an enlisted veteran of the United State Air Force. I worked in the Accounting office approving vouchers for temporary duty service personnel. I remember one time reviewing a travel voucher and there some items being asked for reimbursement that were questionable. I was asked by a higher ranking officer to approve the vouchers, I refused to sign my name to something that didn't feel ethical. I have worked as a state employee for 13 years. In one occasion I was asked to copy some materials that had a copy write, I refused.

I have worked for Sorenson 4 and a half years, this company is virtuous. We have taken steps to ensure that ethics and integrity is the expected work ethic. The company has developed training and regularly meets with the video interpreters stressing the importance of following the mandates set by the FCC and Sorenson policy. As a management team we take extra steps to ensure the interpreters provide video service in an accurate, efficient, and timely manner. Therefore the seamless experiences (functionally equivalent) for those communicating via telephone with the use of video relay services- both deaf and those that do not sign.

Sorenson has taken measures to ensure that the Deaf community receives qualified interpreters. They have provided support and training for Interpreters to maintain their credentials as a qualified/certified interpreter. They have developed and made available the best technology possible to allow the Deaf and Hard of Hearing community access to telecommunication. This experience has allowed them yet again, a seamless and equivalent opportunity to make phone calls daily similar to the majority of the population who can hear and use the telephone daily and have all their lives. The ability to make a call within a second of picking up the phone is a recent phenomenon for the Deaf. When I have to search for a signal on my cell phone before making a call and can't find one I become agitated. With the interpreters employed by Sorenson and the volume of calls that are received at Sorenson, rarely does a person have to wait for the interpreter to become available enabling the Deaf the opportunity to make a call within the time expectations that I have.

The second perspective I would like to share: My parents were deaf, now both are deceased. I have always said if my mom were alive when this terrific new opportunity (Video Relay Service) came about, people would check their caller ID to see if Maggie was calling again. I lived my life making phone calls for them both since the 1960's. It was just something I had to do. There were telephone calls to the doctor, to the bank, to the credit card companies, to the utility company and many other business type calls that only a qualified/certified interpreter (adult) should have been interpreting- not a child. But then again to be fair- there wasn't a professional organization for interpreters then. There was a call from my relatives telling me (a child of 10) that my grandmother had died, and I then had to tell my mom her mother had just died. My mom should have been the one to receive that call directly, not her small child.

Many members of the Deaf community have had the opportunity to be self sufficient finally. They

have been able to get timely information and do not have to rely on others and then wonder if they got all the correct information. Sometimes people that are not qualified or knowledgeable in sign language will tell Deaf people what they think is important. I edited (innocently as a signer not an interpreter) information when I was a child to my Deaf parents, so I know others do too and I have seen it happen, intentionally. Once again ?Integrity and reliability? is something that can be assumed. Sorenson has taken steps to make sure it happens to the best of its? ability.

If a company with less acceptance of standards and less acceptance of requirements becomes the game in town. I am afraid that the integrity and reliability may be jeopardized. The Deaf community already feels they are being deprived of services in many areas, why does there have to be another instance that ?Those that know nothing of what it?s like to be Deaf- make decisions?. Please listen and know that Sorenson does. It listens to its community, it listens to its employees, and Sorenson listened to you and took the steps you asked it to take when they came to you first!

If Video Relay Services have to be compromised because of such a drastic cut in funding to Sorenson, I can only say ? the integrity and the insurance of professionalism may be compromised and gosh it sure will feel like we?re back in the 60?s.